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Senate

(Legislative day of Wednesday, September 17, 2008)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Rev. Peter Marshall, Jr., Orleans, MA, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray for the men and women of this Chamber, who by Your mercy have been granted the high privilege of being a U.S. Senator. Make them mindful, O God, that they hold their office as a public trust; that they are first responsible, not to their constituents or each other, but to You, as men and women who will one day stand before Your throne to give account for their lives. Father, if any of them are laboring under the jaded cynicism that can come from years spent in the political process, cleanse them from it. Father, grant them a renewed vision of the nobility of a life spent in public service. Fire their hearts, O God, with the love of truth and honest dealing, that they may rise above mere vote trading and the blandishments of lobbyists and do that which is right in Your sight.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK L. PRYOR led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication

to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 18, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following the remarks of the two leaders, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

I have been in contact with the Republican leader. We hope, in the near future, to be able to enter a unanimous consent agreement to move forward on the tax extenders legislation, with limited debate. We also were unable to reach an agreement to consider the Advance America's Priorities Act. I am expecting a call from Senator COBURN momentarily to see if we can work our way through that. If we are unable to reach an agreement today on the extenders package—and we certainly think it would be possible, with an agreement, to work through the Coburn problems, but if we cannot do that, we will have to have a cloture

vote in the morning on S. 3297. I hope that is not necessary.

I remind everybody that the adjournment date is next Friday. Everyone who holds things up must be very careful that they are not holding up our getting out of here on time. We have to do the extenders. We have to do the energy legislation. We have to do work on the stimulus bill, a CR, and a few other things that are absolutely necessary. I have spoken to the House leadership, and they want to be out by next Friday. But we have to send them some things before we can be out by next Friday.

I remind everyone that it is possible that we might have to work the next few days. There is nothing to change that at this stage. Monday, there will be no votes. I announced that some time ago. That being the case, whatever we do this week, then we have next Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and that is our adjournment date. If we don't finish our work by next Friday—or Saturday, if that is the case—the following week is a Jewish holiday, Rosh Hashanah, which means we would have to come back the following Wednesday. So I hope everybody understands how difficult this is. One of the Senators said to me: Why aren't you more definite in what you are scheduling? I just cannot be, with the procedures in the Senate. One or two people can really throw a monkey wrench into how we move forward.

I hope we can have a very productive day. It is possible that we can complete the tax extenders and the energy legislation today. We could do that all today. There is no reason we can't. We know what we need to do. We need to pass the paid-for extenders on energy. We need to have a vote on AMT, whether we are going to pay for that, and we need to have a vote on the rest of the extenders package. Time limits are in

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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